

Preparing to reopen your facility

Being required to close your facility for even a short time can be challenging. But upon reopening, it's crucial not to let your eagerness to establish a sense of normalcy prevent you from taking important steps to protect your facility. The hypothetical example below illustrates the risks of restarting a facility without taking proper precautions.

THE LOSS

A business fully reopened its facilities following the lifting of a months-long civil order. Two days after reopening, the facility sustained a catastrophic fire after an overloaded circuit breaker failed, igniting wiring and nearby combustibles. The fire resulted in \$4.25 million in losses, including the total loss of the building, inventory, and machinery, along with business interruption. The business also incurred more than \$200,000 in uninsured costs, including deductibles, re-staffing expenses, claim management costs, and a sustained decline in sales.

THE LESSON

The business fully reopened without developing a plan. They failed to inspect electrical panels, wiring, HVAC, plumbing, and security systems, and neglected end-of-day inspections. A subsequent investigation also revealed that, at the time of startup, employees had noticed lights dimming and a faint burning smell, but because they weren't involved in a defined restart program, they didn't share this information with supervisors.

While this description isn't based on a specific individual or entity, the details reflect characteristic facts from multiple actual claims.

PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES

Consider implementing the following practices as you reopen your facility:

- Monitor local and national guidelines regarding sanitation and disinfecting. Distribute personal protective equipment (PPE). As guidelines evolve, modify your facilities to support testing incoming staff.
- Establish a plan to safely and gradually restart machinery and operations. Train employees responsible for these operations to reinforce safe practices.
- Stagger your startup schedule to allow restarted operations to be observed, managed, and corrected before restarting other elements.
- Have a qualified electrical contractor inspect your facility before restarting, particularly if your facility is more than 25 years old and/or you haven't had the electrical system inspected in the past five years.
- Inspect the facility before starting and after ending operations each day, until the effects of changes are resolved, to identify any issues following the shutdown.
- Ask for employee feedback before, during, and after restarting your operations.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

We're committed to helping you protect your business and your employees by providing resources that can help you manage loss-producing situations.

You can find additional safety resources by visiting [sentry.com](https://www.sentry.com). You can also reach our Safety Services team at 800-443-9655.

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